

Narrative Texts

Lesotho

Right now we are having a very dry season. Every other day when the taps are expected to be turned on, I take my bucket to the tap at about 6 a.m. and put it in line. Your bucket's place in line is very important because the water is on for a limited time and water might run out before all the buckets are filled. A person living near the tap will open it and when she hears the water starting to flow she will begin to fill the buckets in order. Word that the water is running travels quickly. The women and girls come for their buckets and carry them on their heads to their homes. In order to make sure my water will last, I use the same water to wash my hair, take a sponge bath, wash my underwear, and clean the floor. Large laundry is taken to the river until the river becomes too low. I always set aside water for drinking and cooking. The school has its own water tap, but they too get water only every other day. On no-water days, a tub is set out for the students to rinse the eating containers they have brought from home. The school cooks the porridge.

*By Amy Bratsch
Ha Thamere-Qutin-Mt.Moorosi, Lesotho*

Most drinking water comes from one of three sources: a tap or pump, a natural spring, or collected rainwater. Except for the rainwater, the water has to be transported from the source to the people's houses. This is not an easy task. Water is heavy and people must walk one or two miles on rocky, mountainous paths.

Many villages have a water source within a 30-minute walk. Taps are the best. Just turn the handle and water pours! The pumps take more effort. Some are long levers that look like one-sided teeter-totters. Children will bounce them up and down with their whole bodies. Some are two handles that need to be turned like the pedals on a bicycle. And still others need to be cranked in circles horizontally.

But even taps or pumps are no guarantee of water. Sometimes the water flows only for a few hours a day, often early in the morning around 5 o'clock. Villagers must wake up this early to get their buckets in line and wait for the water. Sometimes the taps dry completely and people must walk even farther to another village or natural spring. (Remember how hard it is to carry water?)

Natural springs are good, but people need to scoop the water into buckets, which can take a long time. Rainwater is collected from most metal roofs, but the traditional houses have thatched roofs. And the dry season can last a long time, which makes collecting rainwater ineffective during that time.

My water comes from all of these sources. I need to pay someone to collect my water from a tap or spring, whichever is available. I can't do it myself. It is too far to carry those heavy buckets and I haven't mastered carrying them on my head! If it rains, my host family will collect rainwater from their metal roof. My house is next to theirs, but my roof is thatch.

*By Becki Krieg
Qacha's Nek, Lesotho*

Expository Text

Lesotho

Lesotho is a land of mountains, with two major ranges dissecting the country from NE to SW. It lies entirely out of the tropics, as far south of the Equator as Houston, Texas, is north of it. The climate of Lesotho is dry and sunny, with clearly marked seasons. Being in the Southern Hemisphere, the seasons are reversed from what we in the Northern Hemisphere are used to. The winter months from June to September vary from chilly to cold, depending on your elevation. Days are normally filled with sunshine and intensely blue skies. Mean winter temperature in Maseru is around 50 degrees Fahrenheit. It freezes almost every night in the mountains, and snow is common. Summer, from November to February, is the rainy season, though earlier in the 1990s, there were droughts and some wells and springs ran dry.

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Madagascar

Namoly is situated in a valley in the mountains on the central high plateau of Madagascar. The water runs off the surrounding mountains and enters the valley in the form of two rivers. There is always an abundant amount of water in the river. People use this water for all of their needs, including cooking, drinking, washing clothes, watering gardens, and irrigating the fields.

Every day, women or young girls can be seen fetching water from the river in brightly colored buckets. They balance full buckets of water on their head for the trip home. Never once do they spill the water, even though the majority of them have babies tied to their backs with *lambas*.

However, a few of the villages have water pumps, built by World Wildlife Fund, saving them the walk to the river. My water comes from one of these pumps, which I collect in the buckets every morning. Often I wait my turn with the young girls fetching their water.

The most interesting and beautiful aspect of water here is how much water is used for irrigation of the rice fields. Irrigation canals run everywhere in the valley, sometimes creating a complex mosaic.

*By Mark Danenhauer
Namoly, Madagascar*

In Andranomena, there is a pump that constantly spews water, rather like an open fire hydrant. We are lucky because this water is clean, clear, abundant, and constantly available right in the village. The villagers get their water from the pump in buckets. Various people drive through town and fill big jerry cans there, and a couple of local companies come to fill huge tank trucks or barrels almost daily. Neighboring villages, however, have no means to transport water other than to carry it by hand. They must use the closest water source they have, which is likely to be less clean and less convenient.

In Marofandilia, the source is a stream during the rainy season. During the dry season, the stream dries up, and people must walk to one of a series of water holes, progressively farther away, as the closer ones dry up. Finally, when the water hole that is a 15-minute walk away is used, the villagers dig a well in the dry streambed, which provides water until the rains come, and the cycle begins again. The water in the ponds is dirty, and the well water is not much better, especially at the end of the day when the level is low from so many people getting water all day.

*By Jina Sagar
Ambalahenko, Madagascar*

The Republic of Madagascar is made up of the island of Madagascar—the fourth largest in the world—and several smaller islands off the southeastern coast of Africa in the Indian Ocean. Madagascar was once a part of France, and became an independent state on June 26, 1960.

Madagascar is currently experiencing serious environmental problems, particularly in the areas of deforestation and soil erosion. Madagascar has a climate with rainy and dry seasons. In the summer (December to April), the coastal regions are very hot and dry in the west in the east. The central plateau is warm with periods of rain. The winter months on the central plateau do get chilly. Along the west coast it is warm and dry; along the east coast it is warm with occasional showers.

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